



NEWS RELEASE

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Higher Rates of Sexually Transmitted Diseases Reported in North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. –The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is reporting an increase in the number of confirmed sexually transmitted disease (STD) cases. Cases of gonorrhea and syphilis have risen, according to Lindsey VanderBusch of the Division of Disease Control at the NDDoH. Statewide data show that the number of cases of syphilis has risen from 15 to 24 since 2012. The number of cases of gonorrhea has increased from 340 cases to 471 cases since 2012.

People at risk for STDs include:

- young people ages 15 to 24 who are sexually active
- people with multiple sexual partners
- people who use condoms inconsistently
- people who have anonymous sexual partners
- people who are sexually active and infected with HIV

North Dakotans can reduce their risk of being infected with an STD by:

- abstaining from sexual activity
- having only one non-infected sexual partner
- using condoms consistently with every sexual encounter

Syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia are more easily treated in their early stages with antibiotics. If left undiagnosed and untreated, STDs can eventually cause serious complications, including sterility or even death. For those who may not be able to afford health care, “there are clinics and several local public health units across the state that can provide reduced or no-cost testing and treatment,” VanderBusch said.

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One of the major hurdles with treating STDs is not only treating the patient, but also treating their sexual partners. Those who may be reluctant to seek treatment because of privacy concerns should understand that testing, treatment and notification of partners is all done confidentially. According to VanderBusch, “programs are available to ensure those who are diagnosed and their partners are tested and treated appropriately.”

The NDDoH is contacting physicians throughout the state to remind them to be aware of possible STD exposures when they see patients. “Some physicians do not see many instances of certain sexually transmitted diseases and may not recognize some of the symptoms they see as being caused by an STD. We wanted to raise the issue with providers to make sure members of the public are getting diagnosed and treated appropriately,” said VanderBusch.

For more information, contact Lindsey VanderBusch, North Dakota Department of Health, 701.328.4555

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